

Deadline extension for agricultural preservation districts puts Delaware closer to preserving 381,000 acres of farmland

DOVER, Del. – Since 1996, the Delaware AgLands Preservation Program has preserved 127,000 acres of the state's 508,000 acres currently in agricultural production. After a few years with reduced funding due to statewide budget woes, the tides have turned and the program received full funding this year from Delaware's General Assembly at 10 million dollars.

"Delaware has the best farmland preservation program in the country. We have preserved 25 percent of our landmass in agriculture, but we have a lot more to go," said Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse. "Farmland preservation is an important tool that guarantees land will be available for future generations so that we can continue to produce the agricultural commodities needed to feed Delawareans and our neighbors."

The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation voted to extend district enrollment until December 31, 2018 to any agricultural landowners who want to preserve their farms and still have the opportunity to submit an application for the upcoming round. Farms must be enrolled in a preservation district before the landowner can sell an easement.

According to the Delaware AgLands Preservation Program, there are currently 300 farms participating in the 10-year voluntary preservation districts eligible to sell their development rights during Round 23. Those farms comprise an additional

46,000 acres that could be permanently preserved.

“Agriculture is an economic driver here in Delaware. Our family farms contribute eight billion dollars to the economy and ensuring their sustainability through farmland preservation is important to Delaware’s future,” said Governor Carney. “Delaware is fortunate to be within eight hours of most of the major population centers, which creates an opportunity for our family farmers producing fruits, vegetables, chickens and grains to enter the retail market. And with the recent agreement to further develop the Port of Wilmington, we are helping to open future international markets for our farmers.”

Typically, landowners are eligible to submit a bid to sell their farm’s development rights the year after they enroll their farm into a district agreement. District applications for the upcoming year would usually have closed on December 31, 2017; however, the Foundation members were concerned that landowners might not have applied by the deadline fearing uncertainty for this year’s budget, so the deadline was extended to December 31, 2018.

The Foundation approves all applications, using an impartial discounted ranking system that maximizes benefits for the taxpayer. The Foundation does not own the land, but rather purchases landowners’ development rights and has a permanent agricultural conservation easement placed on the property.

For more information or to obtain applications related to the [Delaware AgLands Preservation Program](#), interested landowners can visit <https://agriculture.delaware.gov> or call (302) 698-4530.

The Foundation’s Board of Trustees includes representatives from agriculture and state agencies. Trustees are: Bob Garey, chairman; Bill Vanderwende, vice-chairman; L. Allen Messick Jr., treasurer; William H. “Chip” Narvel Jr., secretary;

Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse; State Treasurer Ken Simpler; Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Shawn Garvin; Peter Martin; Theodore P. Bobola Jr.; Robert Emerson; and Janice Truitt.

###

Media Contact: Stacey Hofmann, 302-698-4542,
Stacey.Hofmann@delaware.gov